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6 August 1959

ACTIVITIES OF THE CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Critical Communications Committee was established in early 1958 as an Ad Hoc Interagency group charged with the responsibility of defining critical intelligence, stating the requirements for such intelligence in terms of the areas from which it might be anticipated, the expected volume, and the timeliness which various types of critical intelligence must be received. The Committee was also charged with recommending arrangements for the selection of critical intelligence and the designation of relative priority for its transmission.

2. The Committee was made up of representatives of State, Defense, Army, Navy, Air Force, Joint Staff, NSA, CIA and included representatives of intelligence reporting and communications activities in each agency.

3. The Committee submitted a report to the IAC on 29 April 1958. This report and its recommendations were approved by the IAC. The report included a definition of critical intelligence.

"Critical intelligence is information indicating a situation or pertaining to a situation which affects the security or interests of the United States to such an extent that it may require the immediate attention of the President."

It also included a list of those items of critical intelligence which should be reported in 10 minutes or less and a list of those items of critical intelligence which should be reported in 1 hour or less. The report further listed various points in the world from which such intelligence might be expected.

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4. Other actions taken as a result of the Committee's work were the establishment of the Committee as a permanent Committee of the IAC and the issuance of a DCID concerning the handling of critical intelligence. The DCID charges the IAC to monitor the system for reporting the critical intelligence and to initiate proper action to reorient the system where necessary and to correct such abuses as may be discovered. These responsibilities have been carried out on behalf of the USIB by the Critical Communications Committee.

5. During the time the Committee's initial report was being prepared the NSC issued an intelligence directive (NSCID No. 7) appointing the Secretary of Defense as executive agent for the transmission of critical intelligence. The communications authorities of Department of Defense prepared a plan for the creation of a communications system for the transmission of critical intelligence. It was anticipated that it would take several years to implement this plan fully. In the interim however, the Committee decided to proceed with the establishment of a system for the identification and reporting of critical intelligence. It was felt that the mere establishment of such a system would achieve considerable savings of time in transmission through the streamlining of procedures.

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